

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 783

INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

S E C R E T KUALA LUMPUR 4500

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, SN, MY

SUBJ: VISIT OF U.S. TEAM TO DISCUSS COUNTERINSURGENCY EQUIP
AND TRAINING

REF: SINGAPORE 3216

1. THE PROBLEM OF WEAPONRY FOR SINGAPORE WILL ALWAYS INVOLVE A CERTAIN AMBIGUITY CONCERNING ITS USAGE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SINGAPORE FEELS ITS STRATEGY MUST BE A FORWARD ONE: THE ANALOGY OFTEN USED IS ISRAEL. WE HAVE NO QUARREL WITH SINGAPORE DOING WHAT IT FEELS IT MUST TO ENSURE ITS SURVIVAL. WE QUESTION, HOWEVER, U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE STRATEGY. THE ITEMS IN REFTEL WHICH WILL SEEM MOST DIRECTLY THREATENING HERE WILL BE SINGAPOREAN PARTICIPATION IN A JUNGLE WARFARE SCHOOL IN BRUNEI (WHICH WILL BE SEEN BY MALAYSIANS AS AN ATTEMPT TO DEVELOP OFFENSIVE CAPABILITIES BOTH IN EAST MALAYSIA AND ON THE PENINSULA) AND THE C-130'S TO CARRY TROOPS BACK AND FORTH, ALTHOUGH THE LATTER COULD HAVE COASTAL SURVEILLANCE AND AIR/SEA RESCUE CAPABILITIES AS WELL. MALAYSIANS WILL ALSO WONDER WHETHER SUCH THINGS AS SIKORSKYS, APC'S, 105 HOWITZERS AND RIVERINE CRAFT ARE NOT ALSO DIRECTED AGAINST THEM. BUT, HERE AGAIN, THE SIKORSKYS AND RIVERINE CRAFT MAY BE SOMEWHAT LESS OBJECTIONABLE BECAUSE OF OTHER USES FOR THEM WITHIN SINGAPORE.

2. I DON'T THINK THIS IS AN ARGUMENT FOR NOT SELLING THEM

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ANYTHING. IT IS AN ARGUMENT FOR AVOIDING A MILITARY

RELATIONSHIP WHICH COULD BE MISINTERPRETED HERE AND COULD MISLEAD THE SINGAPOREANS INTO THINKING THEY HAVE OUR TACIT APPROVAL FOR STRATEGY THAT MIGHT INCLUDE WHAT REFTEL DELICATELY CALLS OVERT INTERVENTION "WITH OR WITHOUT MALAYSIAN CONSENT."

3. OUR FEELING IS NOT THAT WE SHOULD REFUSE TO SUPPLY SINGAPORE BUT THAT SALES TO SINGAPORE SHOULD BE STRICTLY COMMERCIAL AND THAT WE SHOULD AVOID ANY INVOLVEMENT IN A COUNTERINSURGENCY TRAINING CENTER WHICH WILL BE SEEN BY SINGAPORE'S NEIGHBORS, INCLUDING INDONESIA, AS AN INSURGENCY TRAINING CENTER.

4. FINALLY, ALTHOUGH SINGAPOREANS ARE UNQUESTIONABLY CORRECT IN POINTING TO COMMUNAL SITUATION HERE AND WAY IT IS HANDLED AS CRITICAL ELEMENT IN DEALING WITH THE INSURGENCY (WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY REPORTED THIS), THEIR PRESENT FEARS LOOK TO US AS PREMATURE AND OVERDRAWN. ADMIRAL CROWE AND COLONEL HUGO WILL WISH TO SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES, BUT I BELIEVE THEY WENT AWAY WITH A SOMEWHAT LESS PESSIMISTIC VIEW OF MALAYSIAN HANDLING OF IT SECURITY SITUATION.
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